



Direct Services Report

2012

TWC2 offers a range of assistance to migrant workers in need of help, including free daily meals for the destitute, help to obtain treatment for medical emergencies, guidance to reclaim owed salaries and rescue from abusive employers. Besides recording the scale of these direct services rendered for 2012, this report provides a sampling of the complaints and issues faced by migrant workers in Singapore. It also summarizes the resources that the organization is able to deploy and identifies areas for expansion and future needs.

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TWC2 volunteers Balam (left), Rayner (center) and Pat (right) assist a foreign worker (second from right).

Introduction

Transient Workers Count Too (TWC2) works through advocacy, research, public education and direct services. Of these, direct services take the lion's share of our time and efforts as a society.

When the society began, we gave a central role to advocacy, since changing policy and prevailing attitudes and practices could tackle a lot of the problems we saw at source. That hasn't changed, but the size of our commitment to direct services has (See chart on next page).

The total number of workers recorded as being assisted by TWC2 in 2012 was 2829 (up from 2120 in 2011). In fact, it was our busiest year ever: the highest number of workers directly assisted in any one year previously was 2509 in 2009.

The demands made on our existing social worker, Kenneth Soh, were great and growing, so we set out to recruit a second social worker. As a result, Raymond Ang joined us in June, 2012, and this has helped us to cope better with workers' cases.

We would not have been able to provide all the assistance we have without the participation in our work of the volunteers who, day in, day out, staff the registration desk at the Cuff Road Project, listen to workers and give basic advice to them, help with translation and take part in outreach work. We also needed money to sustain our direct services, and thanks to a number of generous donors, we were able to raise it. TWC2 is grateful to all of them.

Our previous report (for 2012-13) provided a comprehensive survey of our direct services, and readers of this report may find some themes considered at greater length and more explanation of some points provided in that document which is available on the TWC2 website at

<http://twc2.org.sg/2013/03/02/direct-services-report-for-2010-and-2011/>

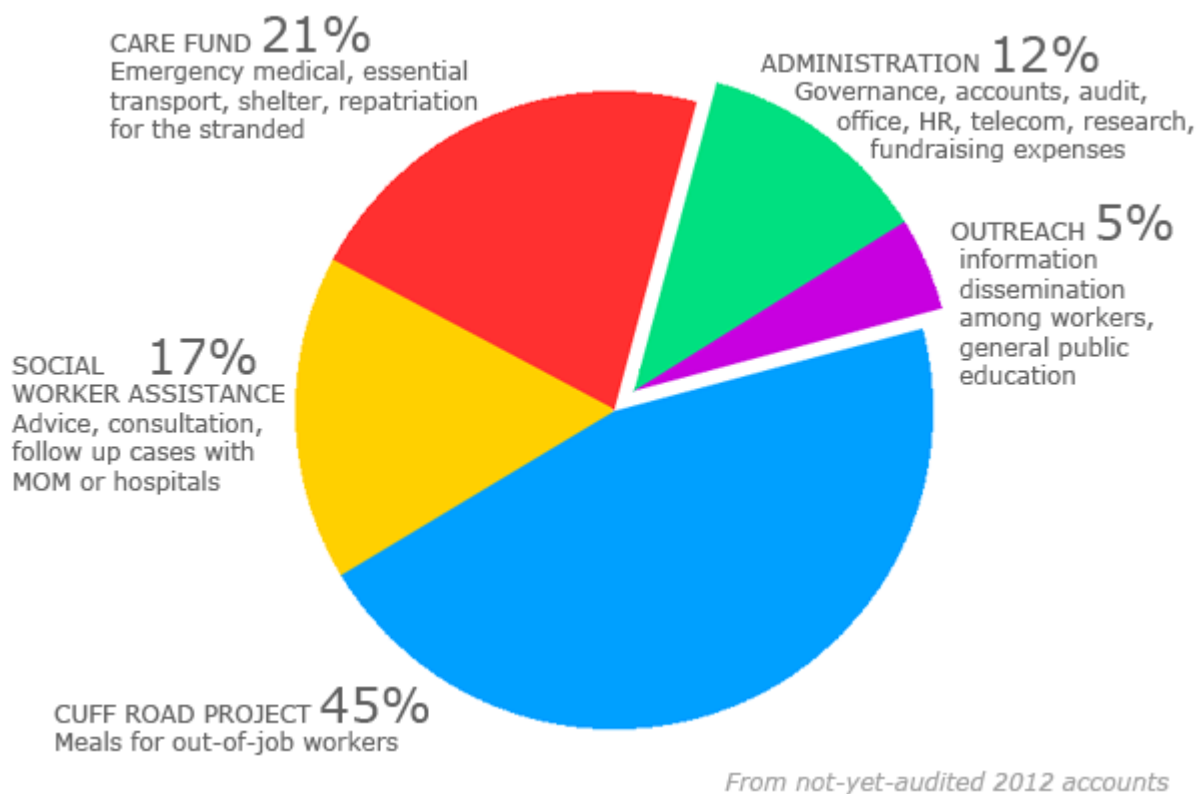


Figure 1: TWC2 spending in 2012 by categories.

In 2012, our total expenditure was \$463,000. This excludes the trust funds (about \$79,000) collected for the benefit of the families of the two Chinese workers who were killed in an accident at the Bugis MRT construction site in July 2012.

Of the \$463,000, we spent only 12% on administration. By contrast, we spent 83% on various forms of direct services: Care Fund, social worker assistance, and the Cuff Road Project.

Direct Services

Direct Services is the name we give to the range of provision we make to give assistance to individual workers (occasionally to groups) who turn to TWC2 for help.

Our direct services are:

- The Cuff Road Project, which serves free daily meals to destitute workers waiting for the resolution of salary and workmen's compensation claims
- Toll-free Helpline for migrant workers and members of the public (Tel: 1800-888- 1515)
- Intervention and case management, to ensure that workers have their problems addressed by the relevant authorities
- Emergency and compassionate assistance for needy cases
- A range of legal advice and assistance
- An enrichment programme offering a selection of Sunday courses, primarily for domestic workers

Our previous report provided an overview of TWC2's direct services work for the two years 2010-2011. It offered a breakdown of issues raised by workers, broken down by gender, but not by nationality. For 2012, we are providing a breakdown of issues by nationality as well as gender (See Appendix II).

The figures provided are minimum ones. There are workers who ask us for very basic information that is easily provided by volunteers, as well as staff, and they would normally not be recorded in our statistics. Helpline calls that require action by us are consistently recorded, as are approaches for help through the Cuff Road Project, but calls to the office, approaches to individual members, and very basic information requests that come through the helpline are not recorded. We therefore assist rather more people than our statistics suggest – and that is without including any that benefit as a result of our advocacy, who we have no way of counting.

In this connection, it should be noted that the government announced in March 2012, that, as of 1st January 2013, domestic workers in Singapore should have a mandatory day off every week. For nearly ten years, TWC2 had campaigned for all domestic workers to have a weekly day off. Apart from regarding this as a fundamental right for all human beings, we argued that it was one of the best protections against abusive behaviour, from physical abuse to non-payment of salaries: workers who can go out of their place of employment regularly and communicate relatively freely can seek help, while workers who are confined to their employer's home and cut off from the outside world can't without great difficulty. Before the announcement, roughly half the 210,000 or so domestic workers in Singapore did not have days off. This decision therefore had the potential to ease many of the problems that domestic workers encounter.

Unfortunately, the day off decision contained two qualifications that detract from its impact. Firstly, the new condition will not apply to workers whose contracts were signed before the end of 2012, until they come up for renewal, so a worker who signed a 'no day off' contract in December 2012 will face a two year wait before she has a legal entitlement to a day off. Secondly, employers and workers are allowed to agree that the worker gives up days off in return for payment. Since workers can be put under various forms of pressure to 'voluntarily' accept such terms, this effectively allows agents and employers to go on preventing many workers from having any time off work when they can go out. We wish to see these big defects remedied, but nevertheless consider the mandatory day off decision to have represented a big step in the right direction.

It will be seen that the great majority of workers recorded as having been assisted are men. This is largely because male workers were and are generally less well provided for compared to domestic workers, who form the majority of female migrant workers in Singapore. Helpline provision, advice services and shelters are generally weighted towards providing for domestic workers in particular. This probably reflects a prevailing view that women who face problems need support and protection and they certainly can't be left to sleep out in the street if they have a dispute with an employer, whereas men are seen as tougher and more able to cope with adversity. We disagree. TWC2 has done what it can to plug a gap in provision for male workers.

However, this does not mean that we have neglected work with domestic workers, but much that we do is not reflected in the bald statistics in this report. We have a good cooperative relationship with the Indonesian Family Network and the Filipino Family Network. They are informal groups of

domestic workers both of which regularly give advice to domestic workers of their own nationalities, and can do so in the language most convenient for the worker seeking help. They also organize classes and social activities for domestic workers.

Nevertheless, we recognize that TWC2 is disadvantaged in providing assistance to domestic workers by not having a shelter. When a worker in a desperate situation that necessitates her leaving her employer turns to us, we currently have to refer her to another organization, simply because we have nowhere secure for her to stay. Even if she turned to us before anyone else, we advised her and helped her to leave her employer, she then becomes the 'case' of the organization that shelters her. So we render valuable assistance, but are not able to assist such workers through to the resolution of their complaints.

Organisation

Our direct services are overseen by the Direct Services Sub-Committee of TWC2. It provides a forum for discussing cases and monitoring their progress and it advises on the management of case work.

The Direct Services Sub-Committee reports to TWC2's Executive Committee and sometimes makes proposals to it or raises issues for discussion. These include points that it seems that the society should raise with the Ministry of Manpower or any other appropriate official body, as well as matters that might be the subject of broader advocacy work. The sub-committee also asks the Executive Committee to decide on matters that fall beyond its scope, such as ones that might warrant a change in policy or extra expenditure.

As we rely heavily on volunteers to sustain our programmes, we publicise needs through a Facebook page, on our website, in a weekly bulletin for members and a bi-monthly newsletter, as well as other channels. We hold a monthly gathering for potential volunteers, which we call Heartbeat. Often, 20 or more people attend, and some volunteer to help in direct services. Normally, new volunteers learn basic skills mainly through being partnered with long term volunteers. The number of volunteers with the Cuff Road Project, our most labour intensive undertaking, varies in the course of each year, but is generally around 20 people.

The Cuff Road Project served a total of 101,819 meals in 2012, or an average of 1,958 a week. This is a significant increase over the numbers in 2011 and 2010 – 1,635 and 1,600 respectively – and represents roughly 28 per cent of all the 362,167 meals served since the project was launched in March 2008.

Breakfast and dinner were provided on weekdays and lunch only over the weekend. As in previous years, the number of workers coming for dinner tended to be nearly twice that of those coming for breakfast. TWC2's Social Workers and volunteers assist many of these men with the problems that they bring to us.

TWC2's helpline received calls from at least 268 individuals in 2012, compared to 221 in 2011 and 111 in 2010. 47 of the calls came from 'concerned others' – Singaporeans raising issues of the treatment of migrant workers. Whereas the overwhelming majority of interventions undertaken and cases taken up for male workers came to TWC2 through the Cuff Road Project, over half of those of women workers came through the helpline (84 out of 143).

Case-work is handled, as appropriate, by our Social Worker and several volunteer case workers. When workers approach TWC2 with a problem, an initial assessment is made and action options considered, including alternative channels for seeking help. Following this information and referral step, an intervention may then be undertaken. This involves actions on behalf of a worker such as accompanying the worker to a hospital or police station, providing financial assistance for medical or dental work, or registering the worker in our free food programme. Case management requires the most far-reaching commitment from our workers. It is undertaken if the worker needs extended assistance, usually resulting from complicated issues or having to deal with very stubborn employers.

Our CAREFund (Compassion and Relief for Emergencies Fund) comes into use when, for one reason or another, a worker is unable to obtain support in an emergency from his or her employer. Employers may disclaim responsibility for workers who have been injured while not at work. There can be reasons why an ill or injured worker is unable to obtain support for treatment, such as when an employer has failed to buy insurance, run away to evade responsibility, or declared bankruptcy. A worker waiting for a case to be settled can have medical problems that are unrelated to his employment.

We always try our best to ensure that employers meet their legal obligations when it comes to paying for medical treatment for injured workers, in particular, but we will not leave a worker to suffer while trying to persuade an employer to pay up.

On some occasions when a worker has needed expensive treatment for an injury or condition that was not covered or only insufficiently covered by an employers' insurance, we have looked for financial help from other sources, rather than severely depleting the CAREFund and risking our capability to help many other workers in need. For example, TWC2 found a benefactor to pay for the medical evacuation of a dying Bangladeshi worker home so that he could see his family for the last time. For an account, see this article on our webpage: <http://twc2.org.sg/2012/10/04/i-hope-to-see-my-family-says-dying-father/>

While we have a good grounding in the main legal measures concerning migrant workers, there are times when we need to seek advice from lawyers or to ask their assistance with a specific case. In 2012, TSMP Law Corporation was particularly helpful not just in helping workers get justice. On two occasions, TWC2 was threatened with libel action by companies unhappy with what was published on our website. TSMP lawyers provided pro bono assistance to defuse both situations.

We have provided space and cooperated with the Indonesian Family Network and the Filipino Family Network in the courses they have held on Sundays throughout the year. The available space was becoming quite cramped, and we were pleased to be able to provide a little more in another room for computer classes.

We produced a fully updated and revised edition of our help leaflet for migrant workers. It was published in English, Mandarin and Bahasa Indonesia versions; for the first time, we also want to produce it in Tamil and in Bangla, but have been held up by technical problems in production.

Since 2006, TWC2 has chiefly been active on the issue of trafficking through our advocacy work, but we have also encountered a number of cases of individuals who we believed were either trafficked or in danger of being trafficked. When they turned to us for assistance, it was for help in obtaining due payment or in returning home: trafficked people generally don't look for help saying that they have been trafficked. The issue is complicated by the fact that deception at the recruitment stage about the nature of the work a person will be doing, control through indebtedness, the confiscation of passports by employers, restriction of communication with families or the authorities, controls on freedom of movement and other factors usually identified as 'trafficking indicators' are common experiences among migrant workers. It is only through interviews that it becomes clear whether a worker has been trafficked or not.

Our figures to date have not included a heading for 'trafficking', and such cases as we have encountered would have fallen under other headings. We have been considering how to improve our capabilities and reporting in this area, but it is important to stress that in all cases, our social workers and volunteers have done their best to assist migrant workers with their complaints and problems, however they were understood.

Profile of Complaints and Enquiries for 2012

Workers Assisted	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012
Female Workers	177	266	56	70	102	143
Male Workers	102	118	2386	2117	2018	2686
Total Workers	298*	384	2442	2187	2120	2829
Others	85	61	67	29	46	47
Total	383	445	2509	2216	2166	2866

Figure 2: Numbers of workers assisted (cases and interventions) 2007-2012. Cumulative total: 10,260. More workers were assisted through calls made by 335 others.

**Includes 19 whose gender was not recorded*

The upturn in the number of workers turning to TWC2 for assistance in 2012, compared to the falls in total numbers in 2010 and 2011 is clear. The number of female workers fell sharply in 2009, but has grown year on year since then, though not to its previous level.

While women of other nationalities who we assisted were domestic workers, none of the Chinese were. China is not an approved source country for domestic workers and Chinese women who seek employment in Singapore are generally on S-Passes and go into restaurant and shop work, entertainment and other areas.

Given the increase in the employment of Myanmar domestic workers in recent years, the figures below suggest that we are still not reaching out very effectively to this nationality.

Female Workers	2010	2011	2012
Philippines	45	43	61
China	3	17	39
Indonesia	15	39	36
Myanmar	0	1	3
India	1	0	1
Sri Lanka	4	0	0
USA	0	0	1
Unknown	2	2	2

Figure 3: Female workers assisted, by nationality, 2010-2012.

Male Workers	2010	2011	2012
Bangladesh	1466	1427	1990
India	641*	554	616
China	10	42	214
Sri Lanka	0	48	1
Malaysia	0	0	1
Myanmar	0	0	1
Singapore	0	0	1
Thailand	0	2	0
Unknown	0	0	3

Figure 4: Male workers assisted, by nationality, 2010-2012.

**For 2010, this includes some Sri Lankan workers.*

In our male worker statistics, a point to note is the development of TWC2's outreach to Chinese workers. In December 2011, we established a team to reach out to workers from China. It was headed by TWC2's senior social worker, Kenneth Soh, and made up of Mandarin speakers. It held a first leaflet distribution to Chinese workers that month, and has followed it up with further sessions. The leaflets publicising our services were well-received and the workers appreciated the fact that the distributors could talk with them in their own language.

Later, a fortnightly surgery was started in Geylang for Chinese workers, on a regular weekday evening. We have also begun developing Mandarin website information and articles.

The first results of these outreach efforts are visible in the figures for Chinese workers assisted by TWC2 in 2012. In 2010, we assisted 13 Chinese workers; in 2011, 59; in 2012, 253. The gender breakdown shows a much bigger increase in male worker than female worker numbers: in the corresponding years, the number of Chinese women we assisted was three, 17 and 39. There are several reasons: the number of Chinese men working here is much greater than the number of women, but we had no initiative to publicise TWC2's services to them; Chinese women workers are generally quite dispersed occupation-wise, while large numbers of male workers are employed by

the same firms, on the same sites, and stay or socialise in particular areas that can be readily identified.

Among the Chinese workers TWC2 assisted in 2012 were the four bus drivers for SMRT who were detained and subsequently imprisoned and deported for their role in a dispute over pay and conditions. We had no prior contact with the workers, but after they were arrested, TWC2 decided to provide humanitarian assistance to the men by renting accommodation for them where they could stay together and prepare for their trial in reasonable conditions. We also provided counselling; they were quite shaken by their detention and the threat of trial when our workers met them.

In late October, TWC2 set up a shelter on Pulau Ubin as a pilot project to see if this could be a viable option given the cheap rent on the island. Our first clients were referred to us by the Corrupt Practices Investigation Board. These were five Bangladeshi farmers who were being trafficked to work in Malaysia and were found stuck at Changi Airport. TWC2 sheltered them until their repatriation in January 2013. The shelter project could not continue because TWC2 could not get it properly authorised. It was, however, a useful learning experience for TWC2 Exco, volunteers and staff. For an account, please read <http://yawningbread.wordpress.com/2013/01/09/five-men-like-flotsam/#more-8794>

Issues

There has not been any significant change in the profile of complaints brought to us by workers compared with previous years. Male workers' complaints focus on salary issues or work injury compensation; female workers complaints are more diverse, though salary problems are the biggest single problem for them too. The heading 'Dispute with employer' usually involves a number of issues, but most often the main one is a salary one.

Issues for Female Workers	2012
Salary Problems	36
Transfer Matters	19
Day Off	10
Repatriation Matters	8
Dispute with Employer	31
Dispute with Agent	7
Termination	9
Access to Documents/Money	1
Miscellaneous	22
Total	143

Figure 5: Issues reported to TWC2 by female workers, 2012.

Issues for Male Workers	2012
Injury/Work Injury Compensation	1727
Salary	569
Transfer Matters	7
Dispute with Employer	76
Dispute with Agent	18
Termination	21
Repatriation Matters	15
Illegal Deployment	2
Poor Accommodation	3
Overstaying	297
Miscellaneous	158
Total	2893

Figure 6: Issues reported to TWC2 by male workers, 2012.

Our figures for 2012, even more than previously, reflect the main issue each worker raised with us and do not capture others. In large part, this is due to pressure of work, which makes the keeping of more systematic records difficult. It is often the case that, in the course of an interview with a construction worker who approached TWC2 with a salary complaint, for example, it emerges that the worker is housed in poor conditions. Most migrant workers we see have had their passports taken by their employers, and yet our figures only refer to one case, in which this was the major point in dispute with a worker's employer. In our experience, employers who treat workers badly in one respect more often than not behave badly in other ways towards them as well.

Workers often bear with violations of their rights until they are not paid, suffer an injury or otherwise feel that they have run into a brick wall with their employer. They put up with poor conditions as the price of having paid work in Singapore, but that should not be taken to mean that they accept them as just, nor that concerned Singaporeans should see them as acceptable.

An underlying problem is the high level of placement costs for both men and women, though this is not immediately obvious. While companies that employ 'foreign talent' at relatively high salaries often assist recruits from overseas to come to Singapore by helping them to find accommodation or assisting them with removal expenses, those who employ low paid migrant workers normally expect them to pay to come to work in the country.

Domestic workers typically pay eight or nine months' salary for their placement in Singapore. Recruiters are paid by home country agents, who add together their costs and fees and then require Singaporean agents to pay them before the workers come to Singapore. The Singaporean agents then add on their costs and fees and this is what local employers then pay in order to hire a worker. In the vast majority of cases, employers deduct this money from their domestic workers' salaries, though a few employers shoulder the costs themselves as part of the normal expense of taking on a worker. No breakdown of the placement costs is provided to employers or domestic workers. Given the relatively low cost of obtaining documents, providing training and accommodation and other practical assistance, it seems that the amounts charged have more to do with a sense of what the market will bear than with a fair mark up on actual expenses, reflecting a service component.

A similar system operates in the case of male workers, except that they pay in advance for their placement, through selling land, mortgaging a home, borrowing from relatives or money-lenders. If anything, the details of what they are paying for are even more lacking in transparency than for domestic workers. They generally pay the equivalent of about one year's salary for their placement costs, but the necessity of meeting some living expenses along the way can stretch that out further. Our research on Bangladeshi workers' costs, published in 2012, indicated that they typically take nearly a year and a half to pay off their placement costs.

The fees that Singapore agents are allowed to charge domestic workers have now been officially capped at one month's salary for each year's placement for a maximum of two years, but this does not cap home country charges and it is unclear whether the Singapore fees include or exclude such things as charges for accommodation in Singapore, before placement, for example. New workers with whom TWC2 do not seem to face shorter repayment periods as yet.

TWC2 has taken up the question of the high cost of placement as an advocacy issue in the past, but it has a direct impact on our direct services. Workers who bear heavy debts at the beginning of their time in Singapore are reluctant to complain about their conditions out of fear of losing their jobs and being sent home, so their discontent with their treatment may fester for some time before they feel driven to act on it. This has allowed some issues such as employers taking workers' passports and other documents, or housing workers in poor accommodation, to persist for far too long now.

For full definitions of the issues mentioned above, please refer to Appendix One.

We include a breakdown of complaints by nationality and gender as Appendix Two.

Future Directions and Needs

The gaps in the existing mandatory day off requirements should be closed. There should be no more delay in providing for all domestic workers to have a weekly day off by law, including those who signed 'no day off contracts' in 2011-2012, before the new day off policy came into effect on January 1st 2013. Domestic workers employed on the old basis perceive their current treatment as unfair.

To protect workers against pressures to 'voluntarily' give up days off in return for payment, TWC2 believes that, by regulation, at least half of each month's day off entitlement should be non-negotiable: it should not be given up in exchange for pay under any circumstances. This would give some protection for domestic workers' right to private lives and friendships, to their right to communicate freely with the world outside their workplace and enable them to seek advice on any employment problems and seek help if need be.

We look forward to further steps being taken to bring transparency to the whole process of worker payment. A start was made by the MOM's requirement that workers' In Principle Approvals should state their future pay. We would like to see the offer strictly enforced: we have encountered cases of workers being induced to sign new contracts on arrival in Singapore by which they accept less than they were promised. Such breaches of promise by employers should be prohibited and penalised; workers should be paid as promised or allowed to transfer to an employer who will pay the salary originally stated.

We hope that the amendment of the Employment Act this year will include a requirement that workers should be issued with itemised pay slips, showing basic pay, overtime details and any deductions made. This will make it easier to raise pay issues promptly and to resolve pay disputes. TWC2 has submitted proposals to this effect during the consultation period on amending the Act.

Increasing TWC2's Capabilities

One of our biggest problems is that our budget has so far not stretched to being able to provide shelter for workers, except in a relatively few cases.

Certain members have accepted workers who have had injuries and need to be in conditions in which they can recover into their homes. We have also, from time to time, rented beds in dormitories where we were confident that workers could live in safe and hygienic conditions while recovering. In the course of 2012, we had what might be described as a 'trial run' with accommodation for one group of workers.

We think that there is a need for three specific types of shelter, arising from our own experience:

- I. Shelter for domestic workers whose position with their employers has become intolerable. TWC2 cannot accommodate them at present. A small shelter would enable us to meet the current needs of our work. We have explored the option of being able to provide on-going support to domestic workers housed in accommodation provided by other institutions in the past year, including embassies and official bodies, but without success.
- II. Shelter for trafficked women. There is no dedicated shelter for women trafficked into sex work in Singapore, though there are institutions that provide varying levels of assistance. In our view, women in these circumstances need their own shelter, since other migrants or battered women in sheltered accommodation can be unsympathetic to their situation, and their counselling needs are quite different from those of most other migrant women workers. TWC2 at present does not have the capacity to run such a shelter, but we are ready to cooperate in getting one established. Our main concerns are that it should be integrated into a 'victim-centred' approach to trafficking and that it should be sustainable for the long-term.
- III. Shelter for male workers. At present, shelter provision for male workers is extremely limited in relation to the needs that we see. We believe that there may be thousands of male workers sleeping out every night in Singapore, and many more in very unsatisfactory accommodation. We encounter cases of workers who have just had operations and been told to rest, or who are in need of decent accommodation while they are being treated, but who are either not being sheltered by their employers (as the law requires) or do not want to stay in accommodation where they fear that they might be harassed or even seized and thrown out of the country by their employer or a repatriation company.

There are two ways in which this can be tackled. When an employer fails to provide decent and secure accommodation to a worker waiting for case resolution or with a work injury compensation case, we propose that the Ministry of Manpower should place the worker in appropriate accommodation and bill the employer for the accommodation and its own costs; this can initially come out of the employer's security bond. Secondly, we want to establish a shelter for men, and we

propose to take a step towards that this year by renting space at a decent dormitory. We will need to undertake some fund-raising specifically for this purpose.

Otherwise, the growth in existing areas of direct services means that our pool of volunteers needs to grow correspondingly: we're working on it!

We still need volunteers who can increase our ability to reach out to workers from Myanmar and provide them with services – we are short of volunteers who speak any of the languages spoken by these workers.

Conclusion

Our direct services programmes assisted more workers than ever in 2012. We have no reason to think that this reflects an increase in the numbers of workers needing assistance, but rather, that more migrant workers know of TWC2 and have come to us for help. We will continue to do all that we can to respond to migrant workers' needs.

We wish to conclude by expressing our thanks and appreciation to our social workers, volunteers and supporters who have made it possible for us to sustain our direct services over another year. We have benefitted from the generosity of many donors, among whom we should mention the Lee Foundation for its support for the Cuff Road Project, the Kwan Im Thong Hood Cho Temple, for its contribution to the CAREFund, and to Mr and Mrs Thio Shen Yi and a donor who wishes to remain anonymous whose contributions paid the cost of our social workers' employment in 2012.

APPENDIX ONE: GLOSSARY OF TERMS

Bad Accommodation	This refers to unsuitable accommodation, such as overcrowding, hygiene and sanitation problems.
Basic Needs	This includes insufficient food, homelessness, etc.
Dispute with Employer	Disputes between workers and their employers, such as working with an abusive employer.
Dispute with or Complaint against Agent	1. Workers have disputes with their agents before their placements.
	2. Workers accuse agents of cheating them.
	3. Workers are threatened by their agents.
Forced Overtime	Workers are forced to do overtime above the legal limit, or to perform the work involuntarily. Under the Employment Act (Chapter 91) Part IV Section 38, workers cannot work more than 72 hours per month of overtime on top of the legislated 44.5 hours a week for 4.5 weeks. However, the Employment Act does not cover domestic workers.
General Information about TWC2	People calling up to request for information on TWC2. For instance, on the kind of assistance TWC2 can offer, what TWC2 does, etc.
Health Issues, Medical Problems or Illnesses	1. Workers are denied time-off to seek medical consultation or are asked to pay for the mandatory periodic medical check-ups.
	2. Workers are dismissed by their employers due to poor health.
	3. Employers did not utilise the insurance policy to compensate the workers' injuries, for fear of increase in premium.
	4. Workers are not covered by any health insurance.
Illegal Deployment	Workers are asked to do additional job/jobs other than what they are contracted for or they are asked to perform work that they are not contracted for.
Information on Transfer Procedures	1. Enquiries pertaining to the procedures for transferring from one employer to another.
	2. Workers want to know alternatives when their employers refuse to accede to their requests for transfers.
Information on Work Permit	This includes enquiries pertaining to work permit cancellation procedures and workers' concern about the consequences when their

	employers have cancelled their work permits.
Loan Repayment Issues	Workers received only a paltry sum of salary or no salary at all for many months in order to pay off loans stipulated by recruiting agents/employment agencies.
Long Wait for Resolution at MOM	The long resolution time has compromised the emotional and/or physical well-being of workers, who are made to wait for an extended period of time for the relevant authorities to resolve any outstanding matters with their employers or employment agencies.
No Access to Personal Documents	Workers' employers or agents withholding their passports, work permits, bank passbooks, etc. from them.
No Off Day	Workers are not given a full rest day or workers would like advice on how to approach their employers to ask for a day off.
No Overtime Pay	Workers have worked overtime but are not given overtime pay.
Others	This includes a wide variety of issues such as sexual harassment, classes for female domestic workers , blacklisting, no work, etc.
Overstaying	Workers stayed in Singapore even though their work permits or special passes are no longer valid.
Overwork	Workers worked long hours without adequate rest. This usually applies to female domestic workers who are not covered under the Employment Act, and thus there is no legal definition for overwork for them.
Physical Abuse	1. This includes slapping, striking, punching, kicking and other acts which cause pain and injury that are not tantamount to causing of grievous bodily harm or death.
	2. Deprivation of sleep, adequate food and access to medical help and medication leading to pain and injury which are not tantamount to causing of grievous bodily harm or death.
	3. This also includes threats of abuse.
Premature Termination of Contract	Workers' employment is terminated before their contracts expire or before the agreed-upon duration of employment.
Repatriation Matters	1. Workers are asked to bear the costs of repatriation, for instance, airfares. Employers are obligated to provide repatriation for workers.

	2. Workers would like to know who should bear the repatriation costs in certain circumstances.
	3. Workers are repatriated against their will.
	4. This includes threats of repatriation.
Reporting on Unhappy Workers	Friends, neighbours or colleagues are concerned that workers may be in difficult situations and may need help.
Request for Resources	This includes request for information, legal advice for female domestic workers, retrieval of rents from landlords, enquiry of the MOM contact number, assistance in referrals of cases to embassies, etc.
Salary Problems	This includes non-payment of salaries, late payment of salaries and unjustified salary deductions.
Verbal Abuse	This includes yelling, swearing and verbal threats that intimidate and/or shame workers to a degree beyond workers' acceptable levels.
Workmen's Compensation	This includes information, advice and clarifications on workmen's compensation matters.

APPENDIX TWO: BREAKDOWN OF ISSUES BY NATIONALITY AND GENDER

Workers assisted by TWC2 social workers in 2012: Casework/Helpline/Total

Total: 436/221/657 cases (59/84/143 female and 377/137/514 male)

(With the helpline calls from others seeking to assist workers, the total is 704)

Number of Male workers: 377/137/514		
Number of Female workers: 59/84/143		
Nationality	Male	Female
Bangladesh	180/20/200	0/0/0
PRChina	108/106/214	22/17/39
India	88/5/93	0/1/1
Indonesia	0/0/0	14/22/36
Malaysia	0/1/1	0/0/0
Myanmar	1/1/1	1/2/3
Philippines	0/0/0	22/39/61
Sri Lanka	0/1/1	0/0/0
USA	0/0/0	0/1/1
Unknown	0/3/3	0/2/2
Singapore	1/0/1	0/0/0
Total	377/137/514	59/84/143

Issue	Male	Female	BANGLADESH*
Injury	100/11/111	0/0/0	
Salary	35/2/37	0/0/0	
Transfer	3/0/3	0/0/0	
Dispute with employer	2/0/2	0/0/0	
Illegal deployment	1/0/1	0/0/0	
Misc.	39/7/46	0/0/0	
TOTAL:	180/20/200	0/0/0	180/20/200

Issue	Male	Female	PRC
Injury	27/20/47	0/0/0	
Salary	38/17/55	12/3/15	
Transfer	2/1/3	0/0/0	
Termination	11/10/21	2/2/4	
Dispute with employer	6/11/17	4/3/7	
Dispute with agent	5/13/18	2/5/7	
Repatriation matter	2/11/13	1/2/3	
Poor accommodation	2/1/3	0/0/0	
Misc.	15/24/39	1/2/3	
TOTAL:	108/106/214	22/17/39	130/123/253

Issue	Male	Female	INDIA*
Injury	41/1/42	0/0/0	
Salary	30/1/31	0/0/0	
Transfer	0/1/1	0/0/0	
Dispute with employer	1/0/1	0/0/0	
Illegal deployment	1/0/1	0/0/0	
Repatriation matter	1/0/1	0/0/0	
Misc.	14/2/16	0/1/1	
TOTAL:	88/5/93	0/1/1	88/6/94

Issue	Male	Female	INDONESIA
Salary	0/0/0	6/3/9	
Transfer	0/0/0	4/3/7	
Termination	0/0/0	2/2/4	
Dispute with employer	0/0/0	2/3/5	
Repatriation matter	0/0/0	0/1/1	
Restricted access to documents	0/0/0	0/1/1	
Day off matter	0/0/0	0/3/3	
Misc.	0/0/0	0/6/6	
TOTAL:	0/0/0	14/22/36	14/22/36

Issue	Male	Female	MALAYSIA
Repatriation matter	0/1/1	0/0/0	
TOTAL:	0/1/1	0/0/0	0/1/1

Issue	Male	Female	MYANMAR
Salary	0/1/1	1/0/1	
Repatriation matter	0/0/0	0/1/1	
Miscellaneous	0/0/0	0/1/1	
TOTAL:	0/1/1	1/2/3	1/3/4

Issue	Male	Female	PHILIPPINES
Salary	0/0/0	8/3/11	
Transfer	0/0/0	6/6/12	
Termination	0/0/0	1/0/1	
Dispute with employer	0/0/0	3/15/18	
Repatriation matter	0/0/0	1/2/3	
Day off matter	0/0/0	4/3/7	
Misc.	0/0/0	0/9/9	
TOTAL	0/0/0	22/39/61	22/39/61

Issue	Male	Female	SINGAPORE
Misc.	0/1/1	0/0/0	
TOTAL:	0/1/1	0/0/0	0/1/1

Issue	Male	Female	SRI LANKA
Salary	0/1/1	0/0/0	
TOTAL:	0/1/1	0/0/0	0/1/1

Issue	Male	Female	USA
Dispute with Employer	0/0/0	0/1/1	
TOTAL:	0/0/0	0/1/1	0/1/1

Issue	Male	Female	UNKNOWN
Misc.	0/3/3	0/2/2	
TOTAL:	0/3/3	0/2/2	0/5/5

**When the workers assisted through the Cuff Road Project, in each case with advice and other help besides provision of meals, are taken into account, the totals for Bangladeshi and Indian workers assisted through various direct services channels become:*

Issue	Male	Female	BANGLADESH
Injury	1368	0	
Salary	481	0	
Transfer	3	0	
Dispute with employer	2	0	
Illegal deployment	1	0	
Overstaying	118	0	
Misc.	81	0	
TOTAL:	1990	0	1990

Issue	Male	Female	INDIA
Injury	312	0	
Salary	31	0	
Transfer	1	0	
Dispute with employer	57	0	
Illegal deployment	1	0	
Repatriation matter	1	0	
Overstaying	179	0	
Misc.	34	1	
TOTAL:	616	1	617

APPENDIX THREE: THE CUFF ROAD PROJECT

Who eats with The Cuff Road Project and why?

(From TWC2's website)

The Cuff Road Project (TCRP) has provided more than 360,000 meals to migrant workers since it began in March 2008. Currently, more than 600 men, from India and Bangladesh, register for meals each month. They are no longer permitted to work, but are required to remain in Singapore to wait for the outcome of salary disputes, injury claims, or ministry of Manpower investigations¹.

Cuff Road Meal Project participants, country of origin and case for 20 Oct - 20 Nov 2012

Type of case	Continuing participants			New participants			TOTAL
	Bangladesh	India	Total	Bangladesh	India	Total	
Injury claim	321	71	392	87	18	105	497
Company problem	37	5	42	49	6	55	97
Overstay/tourist pass	7	8	15	1	0	1	16
Total			449			161	610

Within a recent four-week period from 20 Oct to 20 Nov 2012, 610 men visited the Cuff Road Project for meals. Of these, 497 or 81% have injuries and have made a claim for permanent injury compensation. According to the Work Injury Compensation Act (WICA), they should be housed and fed by their employer. However, these men have left the accommodations provided by the company or been forced out. They describe their employers doing things such as:

- refusing to acknowledge the injury
- failing to allow proper diagnosis and treatment
- making use of a local clinic rather than a government hospital to minimize the injury
- withholding medical forms and medical leave certificates
- failing to lodge accident reports, or failing to assist with injury compensation claims
- attempting forced repatriation
- refusing to provide letter of guarantee for medical treatment, or refusing to pay for medical treatment
- making verbal and physical threats to evict workers from the company dormitory
- disputing that the worker's injury was sustained at the workplace

- refusing to pay medical leave wages
- reducing the average monthly earnings in order to reduce compensation
- contesting medical assessments

The 97 men with salary claims or illegal deployment make up about 16% of the total. They have experienced:

- non-payment or under payment of salary
- miscalculation of overtime pay or holiday pay
- unreasonable / arbitrary deductions for tax, forced savings, utilities, fines
- deductions for medical expenses, airfare, training, protective equipment
- kickbacks to middlemen or employers for job placement or work permit renewal
- forged or forced signatures on salary slips
- illegal deployment to another company or sector

The 16 men categorized as over-stayers/tourist pass refers to men who arrived on a tourist pass, usually to work illegally. If caught having overstayed more than 90 days, they are jailed, caned, and released until the investigation into their illegal deployment is concluded. If caught before the expiry of their tourist pass, they are investigated for illegal deployment, but they avoid jail and caning. Our data show that the number of over-stayers/tourist pass cases in TCRP has decreased over the last three years².

Complexity, Uncertainty, Difficulty

Men waiting for the outcome of injury claims, salary disputes or investigations are left without financial support for what in some cases is a very long time. Most of the men are utterly lost and distraught in this situation. They expect that Singapore, with its excellent laws and systems, will protect them. Many have a hard time coping physically and emotionally when confronted with the complexity, the uncertainty, and the difficulty of their situation.

Being out of work will place great hardship on workers and their extended family. Often their family has sold land or gone into debt in order to raise money for their opportunity to land a job in Singapore. The men agonize over whether to inform their family of their injury or the problem that left them without work or salary. If they reveal their problems, the family will worry, and their wives/mothers will insist that the men come home immediately. Yet going home would mean abandoning their case, and forgoing medical attention, injury compensation, and salary claims. Staying in Singapore could mean months, even years, without any assurance of a successful outcome, while still needing to meet the daily cost of living, travelling and eating in Singapore.

We are aware that some of the men find casual jobs while waiting, but they take a huge risk in doing so. If caught working without a valid work permit, they could be subject to 12 months jail and/or a \$5,000 fine. The men are often given a stern warning, and this may remain on their record and prevent them from returning to Singapore to work.

TCRP Assistance

Through word of mouth, Bangladeshi and Indian men without work or housing gravitate to Little India and eventually find their way to the Cuff Road Project, where they can eat 12 meals each week and access other services. Through TCRP they can visit a free medical clinic (Karunya Clinic run by HealthServe, which charges TWC2 \$5 for each visit). For more serious medical problems they may turn to TWC2's CAREFund. At every meal service we have volunteers who offer advice on how to manage the cases, and on how to communicate with the doctors, MOM (Ministry of Manpower), or the police. Some volunteers accompany the men to the hospital for their appointments or to the police station to report beatings or stolen items. Volunteers also assist the men in their communication by email or phone with the hospitals and MOM.

TCRP participants are issued meal cards each month with their name and a few particulars of their case. The meal cards allow us to track how long workers remain in the program, and thus how long until their case is resolved. Some men eat twelve meals a week with TCRP, others only evening meals, others only on certain days. A few of the participants ask friends to collect packet meals on their behalf. If a man comes only a few times a month, it's likely that he has found a place to stay in a dorm far from Little India. Some may be absent for months due to the distance from our restaurants, and return on public holidays to shop or socialize in Little India.

Through our extended association with the men, we come to know about their families, their medical problems, and their personal lives. Many become close friends of our volunteers. They also assist newcomers to TCRP by informing them of MOM regulations and procedures, and offering personal support. As important as the food and other services are, this program alone doesn't address the deeper issues that cause so many men to remain in Singapore jobless and without food or shelter for so long.

1. *We have no way of knowing the total number of workers in this situation. The Cuff Road Project attracts men from India and Bangladesh because of the location of the restaurants and the type of food served. We don't know what numbers there might be among other nationalities of migrant workers and in other parts of Singapore.*
2. *In 2010, TCRP participants included a total of 265 men who were jailed and caned for having overstayed their tourist pass, and none who were caught working on a valid tourist pass. Lower numbers in 2012 (less than 100) suggest increased surveillance of workplaces likely to hire workers without a valid work permit.*